

March 1, 2001

To: FCC Personnel

From: Mary T. Lucchesi

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Subject: Sale of frequencies 216 - 217 MHz FM

This note concerns the possible sale of the FM frequencies currently dedicated for the use of those who are hearing impaired, specifically 216 - 217 MHz. I am writing to you about this as our son, Joey (one of three children), is severe-profoundly hearing impaired.

When our son was a baby, we chose to attempt to teach him to listen through the application of Auditory-Verbal Therapy. His many hours of hard work are apparent as he is currently mainstreamed with his twin brother in the 4th grade. As you likely know, a person with a severe-profound hearing impairment depends on the source of a voice being close at hand so that it can be clearly heard; if it is not possible for a voice to be close at all times, a transmitted signal to his/her hearing aids is required. In order to understand his teachers consistently, Joey brings two freshly charged transmitters with him to school every day. Each teacher that he sees can wear the transmitter and be clearly heard by him. If a speaker visits the school or if the class has group discussions, Joey ensures that the transmitter is used appropriately so that he can participate fully. In addition, if his class attends Mass or a special event in the church, he is able to plug a transmitter into a wall jack so that all sound through the sound system (e.g., speakers, music) is transmitted to him. Also, we often use the transmitters when we are travelling in the car, in noisy situations such as a museum or a mall, for use with the television, etc.

The use of this transmitted signal is not simply a convenience for our son. Indeed, it is his lifeline. Without a clearly understood signal, Joey would face many language barriers. Distance and noise, unavoidable in classroom situations, would prevent him from hearing a clear signal from his teacher. Wind outdoors would block out instructions from his coach. Engine sounds in a car and other background noises would block my voice when we are conversing in the car, mall, etc. With the use of his FM system, these barriers are minimized for him. He continues to perform very well academically, thrive socially, and participate fully in extra-curricular activities. This child, and many others like him who require the use of their FM systems on a daily basis, will grow into self-sufficient, independent, contributing adults. They will not require additional governmental aid as a result of their hearing loss because they will have surmounted the toughest barrier: learning spoken language. In order to learn

this language, they (just like us) need to hear it. If the frequencies dedicated for their use are removed, their opportunity to learn language at the pace of their peers will be lost.